

EDITORIAL

NEED OF GENETIC COUNSELING SERVICES AT DISTRICT D.I.KHAN

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Genetic counseling is an advocating strategy based on family history and genetic testing results, in order to avoid inherited disorders and their transmission to next generation.¹ For the first time Sarah Lawrence College at New York offered the first master's level training course of genetic counseling in 1969. According to a recent estimate, seven thousand genetic counsellors in 28 different countries are offering their services in the field of medical genetics.⁴ Now-a-days, in the era of advance genomics, the genetic counseling services became more specialized as cancer genetics, cardiogenetics, neurogenetics, infertility genetics and other speciality areas. The clinical implementation of genetic counseling services in US, Canada, and European countries is well established. However, in Asia these only exist in India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and few Middle Eastern countries.⁴ As far as Pakistan is concerned, it is still in infancy in Pakistan, requiring great improvements to be done.

Genetic counseling services are the dire need of those countries where consanguineous marriages are highly prevalent so as to reduce the burden of genetic disorders and improve the quality of life.² Pakistan is one among those countries which has alarming rate of consanguineous marriages, especially first cousin unions.³ However, within Pakistan, Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa, including D.I.Khan division has comparatively high ratio of close familial marriages.

Currently, D.I.Khan is inhabited by multi-ethnic population of local as well as those migrated from South Waziristan and other adjoining tribal areas. According to a non-documented evidence, it is observed that cancer, type-2 diabetes, thalassemia, cataract, and

certain neurological disorders have high occurrence in these people. World Health Organization (WHO), in its report, has observed that genetic counseling services in developing countries are inadequate, and advised the governments to ensure, their availability as part of their healthcare systems.^{3,4}

Keeping in view this scenario, D.I.Khan requires to establish a genetic counseling centre. It is proposed to set up genetic counseling centre with the mutual collaboration of Gomal University and Gomal Medical College, D.I.Khan that should advise the people regarding disease carrier testing, pharmacogenetics testing, pre-natal testing and pre-symptomatic testing. We also propose that each tertiary care hospital should engage a genetic counsellor to prevent the incidence of genetic disorders, select the best personalized medicine and pre-symptomatic management of disease.

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